

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 004038

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, EB/TPP/BTA/EWH; OES FOR SPERLING; DEPT PASS USTR FOR KYLER, BURR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [DR](#) [ETRD](#) [SENV](#) [USTR](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: VISIT OF USTR REPRESENTATIVE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES, MARA BURR

REF: E.O 12958: N/A

1. Summary: Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Environment and Natural Resources Mara M. Burr, described U.S. policy and procedures to Central American and Dominican trade and environment officials meeting at a conference on Environmental Sustainable Development, August 11-13. In meetings with Dominican officials Burr found the Dominicans considering themselves somewhat excluded by the Centrals and found the Dominican administration suffering from internal coordination problems. In the international discussions Burr noted the lack of "anti-DR-CAFTA" or "anti-US" comments. The political rhetoric during the question and answer session was kept to a minimum. End Summary.

2. Deputy Assistant USTR for Environment and Natural Resources Mara Burr engaged Central American and Dominican environment and trade officials August 11-13 in the context of an international conference on environmental sustainable development sponsored by the Commission for International Integration of Central America??? (CIEMADeS). On August 11 at a breakfast meeting Burr and EST officer Olga Luciano, Director of Planning in the Dominican Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment commented that the Ministry has been trying to incorporate environmental issues into all of government planning. This has not been an easy task because the Environment Ministry is only five years old. Other ministries do not necessarily understand the environmental implications of their decisions and the need for coordination. She said environmental planning should feature in long-term development planning. She finds that ministry officials need training. She favored the establishment of a special inter-ministerial committee on trade and the environment. This objective was mentioned later by Ministry's Director for Soils and Water, Ernesto Reyna. Ministry Director of Environmental Quality Felipe Ditren participated in this meeting.

3. The first annual CIEMADeS Conference was held August 10 -11. Burr's presentation was well attended. She explained the provisions of the DR-CAFTA Environmental Chapter and the Environmental Cooperation priorities. Burr stressed that each Party commits to effective enforcement of domestic environmental law and to efforts to improve the environment. She stated it is inappropriate to reduce environmental laws as an encouragement for trade and investment. She noted that a CAFTA country may be called to dispute settlement if it should fail to effectively enforce its environmental law in a sustained or recurring manner affecting trade between the parties.

4. A featured presentation was that on deforestation, given by Paul Latortue of the University of Haiti. Latortue cautioned the audience against blaming Haiti's poor for the country's deforestation, given that deforestation has resulted from historical issues including colonization, postcolonial rule, collapse of the coffee trade, poverty, and lack of government infrastructure. Latortue stated that only 3 percent of Haiti remains forested. News coverage of the conference concentrated on Latortue's message.

5. Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment Max Puig attended the conference and commented in a question-and-answer session at the end that the Venezuela government just provided a USD 6 million environmental loan at terms so good that it was almost a gift. Puig expects to use the loan for sustainable development projects, such as the proposed eco-friendly road to be developed in the "Los Haitises" national park on the Samana Peninsula.

6. Under Secretary of Industry and Commerce Marcelo Puello and staffers Hugo Rivera Santana and Yahaira Sosa Machado received Burr and emboffs on August 11. Rivera complained that he had not been informed about the CIEMADeS conference. This lack of communication and coordination was symptomatic of the Dominican government, he said. Rivera stated that the Dominican Republic had been disadvantaged because it had not been included along with the Centrals in the original framework discussions. Rivera stated that the Environment Ministry is not well coordinated with respect to DR-CAFTA (or many other issues for that matter) because of its structure and the autonomous nature of each sub-secretariat. He

commented that Puig should nominate one person to coordinate all of his sub-secretaries. Rivera found that this fragmentation also hurts the Dominican Republic within DR-CAFTA because it is not clear who is the appropriate point of contact or who possesses decision-making authority. All three officials said that they have not seen the draft DR-CAFTA Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA) work plan that the Environment Ministry is working on. Rivera said Under Secretary Puello has invited all CAFTA trade ministers to the Dominican Republic and none has responded. It appeared that they were not interested. Burr undertook to reinforce with the Centrals the importance of including all the DR-CAFTA countries in discussions and decision-making.

17. At the end of the day Burr met Ernesto Reyna Alcantara, Environmental Ministry Director for Soils and Water. Reyna was relatively quiet and his advisor Victor Venas did most of the talking. The same issues were restated: the Dominicans feel less than a full member of the DR-CAFTA and they hope that Burr can assist them. Venas asserted that Trade and Industry had indeed received a copy of the ECA working plan and he is certain that Sosa had a copy. Ernesto Reyna is the point of contact both for both environmental implementation and the ECA for DR-CAFTA. Venas commented on difficulties due to time zone differences and said that at times the Dominican Republic is excluded from Central American meetings. Burr outlined procedures for administration through USAID and the Department of State of assistance funds.

18. On August 12, Burr discussed enforcement matters with Police Col. Valerio Garcia Reyes who works in National Police on the environment portfolio. Garcia expressed a need for assistance, saying that his division is well organized and has a clear vision of its requirements.

MEIGS